

**Department Of Health
Health Professions Quality Assurance Division
Washington State Board of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery
Interpretative Statement**

Title:	Prescribing Medication without Physician/Patient Relationship	Number: OP99-27
Reference:	Board minutes: November 19, 1999; March 24, 2000, June 2, 2000, January 26, 2001	
Contact:	Program Manager	
Effective Date:	January 26, 2001	
Supersedes:	June 2, 2000	
Approved:	Board	
Signature Board Chair	Mark Hunt, D.O.	

**Interpretative
Statement:**

The Board of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery has been given the responsibility of licensing and disciplining osteopathic physicians and physician assistants in the state of Washington. This charge includes the protection of the health, welfare and safety of the citizens of the state.

The Board has become aware of the issue of practitioners treating patients over the Internet. The Board has determined that basic principles of osteopathic medical practice be utilized regardless of the practice setting. Therefore the Board requires a proper physician-patient relationship be established before commencing any treatment, including the prescribing of any dangerous drugs or controlled substances. A proper relationship, at a minimum, requires:

- 1) verifying that the person requesting the medication is in fact who they claim to be;
- 2) establishing a diagnosis through the use of accepted medical practices such as a patient history, mental status exam, physical examination, appropriate diagnostic and laboratory testing, and maintaining adequate records of exams, tests and findings;
- 3) discussing with the patient the diagnosis and the evidence for it, the risks and benefits of various treatment options; and
- 4) insuring availability of the physician or coverage for the patient for appropriate follow-up care.

It is inappropriate and unprofessional to prescribe drugs based solely on answers to a questionnaire filled out by an individual the physician has never met, as is common in Internet or toll-free telephone prescribing.

Prescribing without personally examining the patient may only be

suitable under certain circumstances including, but not limited to, admission orders for newly hospitalized patients, prescribing for a patient of another physician for whom the prescriber is taking call, or continuing medication on a short-term basis for a new patient prior to the patient's first appointment.

Procedure: Action

Program Manager Evaluate reports based on the Board's criteria and forward for investigation, if appropriate.

Reviewing board member Review the case file and assess for a violation of unprofessional conduct as defined in RCW 18.130.180. If a violation is determined, recommend type of action or recommend for closure.
Return worksheet to program manager for followup.

Program manager Implement any RBM recommended action by forwarding the case to the Legal Unit or schedule for review at the next board meeting.
Follow standard processing procedures for actions/closures.